

State Retirement Plans for Substitute Teachers

*As a substitute teacher in a Washington State public school district or educational service district, you may be eligible to apply for service credit in the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). This is an important optional benefit that can have a significant impact in your retirement years. **Please retain this information for future reference.***

1. **Who is a substitute teacher? RCW 41.32.010 (36) (a) (b)**
 - ◆ A non-contracted temporary teacher or a teacher who is not guaranteed a minimum number of hours. A teacher who works in ineligible positions for multiple employers.
 - ◆ A teacher who works in an ineligible position for one employer and eligible position for another employer.
2. **How does a substitute teacher establish membership?**
 - ◆ A potential member must meet the eligibility criteria for the time period in question.
 - ◆ Plan 1 substitute teachers who have withdrawn their contributions and wish to restore service credit need to contact the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS).
 - ◆ Since September 1, 1991, the eligibility criteria is five months or more in which you work 70 or more hours per month during the school year (September—August).
 - ◆ Membership is established at the time of payment, not at the time service is rendered.
3. **What service qualifies for purchase after membership established?**
 - ◆ A substitute teacher may purchase any creditable service months for periods of teaching service after membership is established.
 - ◆ A substitute teacher may purchase service for periods prior to the year membership is established if they met the eligibility qualifications at the time service was rendered. (Contact DRS at 1-800-547-6657 for information.)
 - ◆ Plan 1 members must work twenty days during the fiscal year to qualify for service credit.
4. **How and when do I apply?**
 - ◆ You may apply immediately following the school year in which the service was rendered, beginning in July for Plan 1 or in September for Plans 2 and 3.
 - ◆ Pick up the application packet, *The Substitute Teacher's Guide to Obtaining Service Credit* for your plan (TRS 1, 2 or 3). The packet is available from your payroll office at the end of the fiscal/school year. You can also obtain an application packet from the DRS Web site at www.drs.wa.gov.

Note: If you have never established membership you will need a Plan 3 application packet.

- ◆ If you are applying for service credit for a period of time prior to the 2004-2005 school year, or if you work for a higher education employer or the School for the Deaf or the School for the Blind, you must submit the quarterly/annual reports provided by your employer to DRS. The employer reports must include the following:
 - ◆ Employer Name
 - ◆ Employee Name, Social Security number and address
 - ◆ Hours worked and compensation paid. Must be totaled by month (TRS Plan 1 members must have totals by days not hours)

- ◆ Signature of employer/payroll authority
- ◆ You have a **six-month interest-free period** to pay for your service credit. The interest-free period begins immediately following the school year in which the credit is earned.
 - **Plan 1 interest-free period:** July 1 through the end of December
 - **Plans 2 and 3 interest-free period:** September 1 through the end of February

Payment received after the six-month interest-free period will require additional interest that accrues each month. Payment in full is required.

5. **Things to remember**

- ◆ Members of all plans are advised to submit a new beneficiary form periodically. Marriage, divorce and remarriage may void your current beneficiary form.
- ◆ Plan 3 members must select a contribution rate and investment program for their contributions. Members are responsible for establishing contact with the Plan 3 record-keeper and managing their own funds. Forms and information for these purposes are included in the Plan 3 version of *The Substitute Teacher's Guide to Obtaining Service Credit* that can be obtained from your employer's payroll office.
- ◆ Members of all plans are advised to maintain a current address with their employers at all times. Tax documents and account statements relating to your pension are mailed to the address provided by your employer.

6. **Is a TRS retiree allowed to draw a pension benefit and work as a substitute?**

- ◆ Retirees are allowed to work as substitute teachers, but there are restrictions on the amount of time they can work. For more information see the DRS brochure, *Thinking About Working After Retirement?* This brochure is available from your TRS employer or DRS. It is also on the DRS Web site: www.drs.wa.gov.